Unity, Ethnicity, & Abraham Lincoln

RICHARD N. CURRENT

THE FIRST ANNUAL
R. GERALD McMURTRY LECTURE
DELIVERED AT
FORT WAYNE, INDIANA
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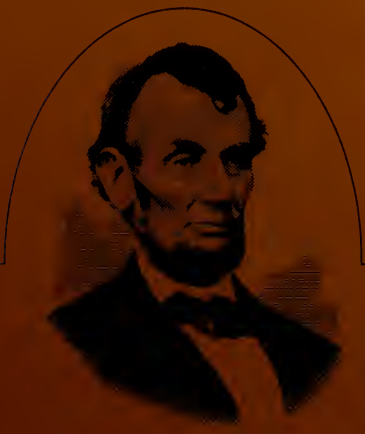

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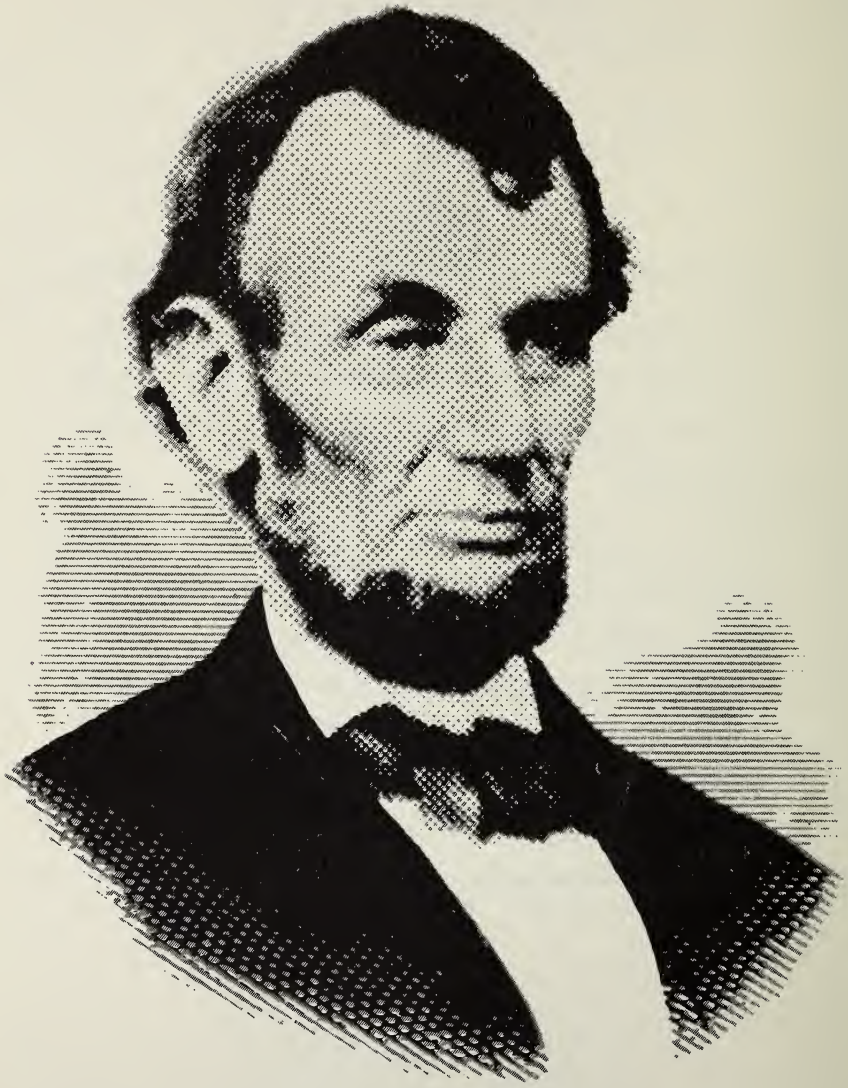

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Fort Wayne, Indiana

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This first annual R. Gerald McMurtry Lecture
was delivered in the Board Room at
The Lincoln National Life Insurance Company
in Fort Wayne, Indiana on May 11, 1978.

RICHARD N. CURRENT

Richard N. Current is a native of Colorado City, Colorado. After graduating from Oberlin College in 1934, he entered Tufts University which awarded him the M.A. the following year. In 1940 Current received the Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin where he studied under William B. Hesseltine. Professor Current has served on the faculties of ten colleges and universities. Today he is University Distinguished Professor of History at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Current's credentials as an authority on Lincoln are outstanding. His numerous publications on the Sixteenth President include (in collaboration with J. G. Randall) Lincoln the President *(1955);* Mr. Lincoln *(1957);* The Lincoln Nobody Knows *(1958);* Lincoln and the First Shot *(1963); and others. But Current's interests go beyond the Lincoln theme. He has written biographies of Thaddeus Stevens, John C. Calhoun, and Henry Stimson; a monograph on the development of the typewriter; two books on Reconstruction; and award-winning histories of Wisconsin.*

In 1975 Mr. Current was honored by his peers when they elected him president of the Southern Historical Association. An outstanding teacher, author, and lecturer, he is one of the foremost interpreters of the enigmatic Lincoln—"The Lincoln Nobody Knows."

Unity, Ethnicity, & Abraham Lincoln

BY
RICHARD
N. CURRENT

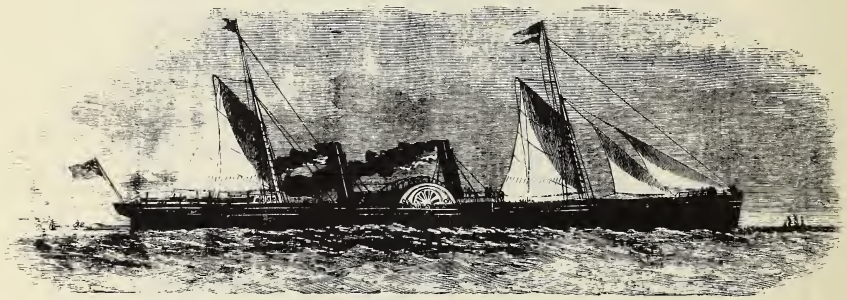
"Getting right with Lincoln" used to be a ritual among Americans of widely differing persuasions.[1] Republican politicians tried to show, especially on each recurring February 12, that Lincoln if alive would agree with them. Not only Republicans but also Democrats sought his implied endorsement. So, too, did many others—conservatives and Communists, atheists and spiritualists, black advocates and white supremacists, nativists and immigrants. All did obeisance to the memory of Lincoln; all claimed his spirit as their own. Many, of course, still do.

In recent years, however, increasing numbers of Americans have turned away from Lincoln. Conspicuous among them are the blacks. Though some of the older blacks continue to honor him as the Great Emancipator, most of the younger ones seem to have repudiated him as a racist and a colonizationist.[2] Less noticed—and hence more in need of attention—is the tendency toward disaffection among the "white ethnics," the Americans of comparatively recent eastern and southern European stock. Though many of the newer immigrants and their descendants no doubt continue to admire Lincoln, the leaders of the "new ethnicity" movement do not consider him vital or even relevant to their cause.

"Now he belongs to the ages," Edwin M. Stanton is supposed to have remarked at Lincoln's deathbed. So far as the majority of blacks are concerned, that might be rephrased to read today: "Now he belongs only to 'honkies.'" If the advocates of the new ethnicity should have their way, the statement might soon need to be further revised, so as to read: "Now he belongs only to 'WASPs.'"

At one time the name and fame of Lincoln held great significance for America's immigrants. That was the case during the first three decades of the present century, when immigration and assimilation were leading topics of controversy in the United States.

In the early 1900s the numbers of foreigners annually arriving in this country set new records year after year —almost a million and a quarter in 1905. A larger and larger proportion came not from the earlier sources, not from Great Britain, Germany, and the Scandinavian countries, but from the countries of eastern and southern Europe, which provided nearly three-fourths of the total arriving between 1900 and 1910.



Among the Americans whose ancestors had arrived earlier, some looked upon the newcomers as largely inferior peoples who ought to be carefully screened or entirely excluded. Some thought that, at the very least, care should be taken to see that these strangers to American ways were properly Americanized. Others continued to rely on the "melting pot," confident that the newer elements would blend in, as the older ones presumably had done, and that the better qualities of each would be added to the amalgam of a constantly improving American people and American civilization. Still others, much the fewest of all, preferred to keep the different nationalities more or less distinct and to preserve in the United States a great variety of harmoniously coexisting groups and cultures.[3]

The First World War temporarily checked the influx of immigrants, but not the debate about them. Once the United States had entered the war, the strains grew more intense than ever, as the Old World ties of British-Americans, German-Americans, Irish-Americans, and other "hyphenated" Americans came into conflict. In response to postwar xenophobia, Congress passed the immigration restriction acts of 1921 and 1924, which discriminated against the more recently arriving nationalities. No longer was immigration itself a serious "problem," but there remained the question of what to do about the already present immigrants and their children.

Throughout the controversy the name of Lincoln had often been seen and heard. Advocates of strict Americanization, of melting-pot assimilation, and of preserving immigrant inheritances—but seldom if ever the advocates of exclusion—appealed to his memory for support. Immigrants themselves accepted him as a favorite hero.

Generally the older-stock immigrants and their descendants needed little or no indoctrination. Germans and Scandinavians could boast, though the evidence was hardly conclusive, that their forefathers had managed to get right with Lincoln long ago and, indeed, had been responsible for his election in 1860. Some German-Americans even claimed Lincoln as one of them —a German—on the basis of an old Land Office warrant made out to his grandfather Abraham *Linkhorn,* a perfectly good Germanic name.[4]

The Americanization programs of the period were directed primarily to the immigrants of the more recent national origins. These programs had an important place in the activities of the settlement houses, in special night courses to prepare adults for naturalization, and above all in the curriculum of the public schools.

One of the teacher guides, titled *A Course in Patriotism and Citizenship,* published in 1914 and republished in 1918, referring to the ideals of the Pilgrims, the Revolutionary leaders, and Lincoln, declared:

"These ideals must become the heritage not only of every American-born child, but of every alien as well." The book mentioned Lincoln more often than any other historic figure, even George Washington. In classroom plans for the first grade through the sixth, the teacher could find advice on using Lincoln as a model. Selected incidents from his life would show he "had a heart brimful of kindness," pitied the poor black slaves and "caused them to be freed," "was always good to his mother," constantly tried to improve himself by study, and was a great statesman because he loved "his *whole* country" and fostered "good will among all citizens." In short, he embodied the American spirit—"courage in the face of difficulties, loyalty to truth, sympathy and courtesy, industry and reverence to God and to one's fellowmen."[5]

Such was the Lincoln theme as it was utilized by the strict Americanizationists, by those who viewed assimilation as a one-way process through which the newcomers and their descendants would be compelled to give up their European inheritance and adopt American ways. But Lincoln also served the purposes of assimilationists who saw the melting pot as a mutual and voluntary process to which the Europeans also had a positive contribution to make.

One of these assimilationists was Emory S. Bogardus, a social scientist of Dutch colonial ancestry, who in Chicago, in 1908, had begun "to teach the English language and American principles to the foreign-born," especially the Poles. Largely on the basis of that experience, Bogardus wrote a book, *Essentials of Americanization,* which went through three editions in 1919, 1920, and 1923. To Bogardus, forced Americanization was as bad as forced Prussianization or Russianization. To him, Lincoln therefore was especially relevant, for Lincoln had subordinated nationalism to individualism. With Lincoln, "the appeal was to the Union, not as an end for purposes of national glorification; but for safeguarding the liberties of the individual, and for the widest, most consistent expression of personality."

Lincoln was a symbol not only of democracy and justice but also of individual opportunity—a man who "rose from the depths of poverty and obscurity to the heights of fame and service." He had been, and still was, definitely on the side of the poor immigrant. "The employer needs to realize," Bogardus wrote, "that labor, as Abraham Lincoln said, takes precedence over capital in industrial enterprises. The welfare of labor, even unskilled immigrant labor, is a more important factor than the welfare of capital."[6]

Also citing Lincoln was a social scientist with yet another background and point of view—Julius Drachsler, a young assistant professor at Smith College, a Jew of Czechoslovakian birth. In 1920 Drachsler proposed the experiment of "consciously creating a composite culture in America." This would be done by "deliberately furthering an interest in the cultural achievements of the immigrant groups and by systematically bringing before the minds of their descendants these variegated culture-materials." It would be a cooperative undertaking, private and public. For the various groups, "voluntary cultural organizations" would conserve the "unique values of their heritage." The state would "find its proper function in the harmonization of these values, through a synthetic cultural curriculum in its public educational system."

All this would require a conception of democracy—"cultural democracy"—that was quite different from the "common notion of Americanization." Fortunately, the "popular imagination" already was close to grasping the "kernel" of this idea. "To the American mind," Drachsler explained, ". . . Abraham Lincoln is the embodiment of Democratic personality. His freedom in mingling with men of all sorts, his simplicity, almost crudity of manners, his surpassing warmth and human sympathy, his just treatment of high and low alike, are the qualities of his character on which the people's fancy loves to linger." And these were the qualities of cultural democracy.[7]

Proponents of restricting immigration—of "closing the gates"—showed little enthusiasm for the use that others were making of the Lincoln image. One of the most prestigious of the restrictionists was Edward Alsworth Ross, professor of sociology at the University of Wisconsin. In the preface to his book *The Old World in the New* (1914) Ross wrote: "'Immigration,' said to me a distinguished social worker and idealist, 'is a wind that blows democratic ideas throughout the world. In a Siberian hut from which four sons had gone forth to America to seek their fortune, I saw tacked up a portrait of Lincoln cut from a New York newspaper. Even there they knew what Lincoln stood for and loved him.'" What he stood for, according to the "idealist" whom Ross was quoting, were "American ideas of freedom and opportunity." Ross went on to express his own fear, which formed the thesis of his book, that the United States would soon cease to be a land of democracy, of freedom and opportunity, if it should continue to be overrun by the new barbarian hordes.[8]

Not only were those immigrants from Siberia enthusiastic, but so were immigrants from many other parts of the world. Mary Antin, who a couple of decades earlier had arrived as a Jewish girl from Russia, noted in *The Promised Land* (1912) "how many 'green' pupils entered school last September, not knowing the days of the week in English, who next February will be declaiming patriotic verses in honor of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln, with a foreign accent, indeed, but with plenty of enthusiasm."[9]

Mary Antin herself admired Washington the most, but the favorite of the great majority of the immigrants was Lincoln. "Far more than any other American, Lincoln makes the immigrants feel that this is their country as well as the country of the native-born," a free-lance writer, Grace Humphrey, declared in 1917. "So they have adopted him for their own, perhaps because they share with him the pioneer spirit; they, too, have adventured into a new country where life is difficult and hardships many. Like him, they have struggled

with unfavorable surroundings, against ignorance and extreme poverty." Ms. Humphrey proceeded to give touching examples of Lincoln devotees who in origin were Russian, Lithuanian, Polish, Italian, or Hungarian, several of them Jews. "And to native-born Americans," she concluded, "the immigrants' love of Lincoln suggests a kindling of our patriotism, a new dedication of ourselves to the things for which he lived and died, to the Lincoln ideal, the truest symbol of American democracy."[10]

Americans of diverse national backgrounds continued for some time to honor Lincoln and the values he symbolizes, such as personal liberty, individual opportunity, and national union. President Franklin D. Roosevelt made him an honorary sponsor first of the New Deal and then of the anti-Axis war effort.[11] The Second World War had no such traumatic effect on ethnic relations in the United States as the First World War had had. During the 1940s, representatives of various nationality groups cooperated on the Common Council for American Unity to encourage assimilation of the true melting-pot kind. The Council published the magazine *Common Ground*. "Never has it been more important," the magazine averred, "that we become intelligently aware of the ground Americans of various strains have in common . . . that we reawaken the old American Dream, the dream which, in its powerful emphasis on the fundamental worth and dignity of every human being, can be a bond of unity no totalitarian attack can break."[12]

During the postwar decades of booming prosperity, the once largely impecunious ethnic groups seemed rapidly to be realizing the American dream, at least insofar as the dream promised a chance for everyone to rise in the world. One researcher, the Reverend Andrew Greeley, a Roman Catholic of Irish extraction, produced some rather startling evidence in this regard. From responses to questionnaires, 1963-1974, Greeley made

the following deductions: His own group, the Irish Catholic, was the "best educated Gentile group in American society," and the Italian and Polish Catholics were making the most rapid educational rise. Next to the Jews, the Irish Catholics also enjoyed the highest family income. After these two groups stood, in descending order, the Italian, the German, and the Polish Catholics; then the Episcopalians and other Protestants of various denominations; and, at the very bottom, the Baptists. Though, as Greeley himself recognized, there were "limitations in the data" available to him, there seems little reason to doubt his basic conclusions: "The Jewish immigrants clearly have become immensely successful," and "considerable numbers of Catholics have 'made it' into the middle class and this must be counted, at least to some extent, a success for the American political, social, and economic experiment."[13]

Nevertheless, Greeley joined with a few other Catholic and a few Jewish intellectuals to renounce the American dream as an illusion and to promote in place of it a great variety of ideals, a different set of them for each ethnic group. Prominent among the disaffected intellectuals, in addition to Greeley, were Monsignor Geno Baroni, son of an Italian coal miner in Pennsylvania; Michael Novak, mainly of Slovakian background; and Irving Levine, a Jew of Polish and Lithuanian descent. As another member of the "coterie" recalled, "a small coterie of about twenty people gave birth to what was called the 'ethnic movement.'"[14] These "white ethnics" imitated the Black Power movement, as the Indians and the Spanish-speaking minorities previously had done. If Americans with African, aboriginal, Mexican, or Puerto Rican ancestors got special consideration, why should not Americans with eastern or southern European ancestors get the same kind of preferential treatment?

A classic exposition of the new ethnicity is to be found in Michael Novak's book *The Rise of the Unmeltable Ethnics* (1972). According to Novak, the melting pot would not work—and should not work—in the

case of such peoples as his fellow Slovak-Americans. "The view that we shall become one by becoming *like* each other, more 'Americanized,' is really not an enlightened view . . . ," he maintains. To him the villains in the American drama are the Protestants of British ancestry, that is, the so-called White Anglo-Saxon Protestants, the WASPs. "The recent rise in ethnic assertion is due in large measure to the discrediting of traditional WASP styles . . . ," he says. The White Non-Anglo-Saxon Catholics (as they might conversely be called) have "acceded far too long to the pressure of Americanization—which was really WASPification." Novak resents the kind of instruction he himself received in public school. "Nowhere in my schooling do I recall any attempt to put me in touch with my own history," he complains. "The strategy was to make an American of me."[15] Obviously this missionary of ethnicity and Catholicity does not look upon the Lincoln story as, in any sense, a part of his own historical background.

What Novak and the others denounce as "Americanization," they might more accurately refer to as "industrialization" or "modernization." It is a worldwide trend, though, to be sure, it has gone the farthest in the United States. The broad and ineluctable sweep of events—far more than the narrow kind of Americanization that nativists once tried to impose—has given shape to the middle-class culture that now predominates among Americans, whatever their national origin. Against the new cosmopolitanism there has risen a reaction, also worldwide, that may be termed the new tribalism. It takes the form of Quebecois separatism in Canada, Scottish and Welsh nationalism in the United Kingdom, and other divisive movements in Europe, Asia, and Africa. It takes the form of a heightening ethnic self-consciousness and ethnic exclusiveness in the United States. What Novak and others like him really object to is the growing universalism of the twentieth century. What they are actually calling for is a return to the imaginary virtues of nineteenth-century European peasant life.

Instead of the term "new tribalism," the ethnicity advocates use the term "cultural pluralism" to describe their program. "Cultural pluralism" has an attractive sound largely because of its ambiguity. To many Americans it implies an appreciation for diverse folkways as ingredients of, or as supplements to, the prevailing American mixture. In that sense, it is perfectly consistent with the melting-pot ideal. To the self-appointed ethnic spokesmen, however, it means the intensification of cultural differences as a means of maintaining group separateness.

In the name of "cultural pluralism" the ethnic agitators have undertaken to revolutionize American public education, and they have made considerable headway. Unlike Julius Drachsler, with his "cultural democracy" back in 1920, they would not leave the promotion and preservation of Old World cultures to private organizations, but would force it on the public schools. The Ford and Rockefeller foundations have provided generous grants for the cause. The federal government is giving moral and monetary support in accordance with the Ethnic Heritage Studies Programs Act of 1972, which calls for the training of teachers to "teach the importance of ethnicity" and for "the rewriting of American history as ethnic history."[16] The educational establishment has added its approval, and pedagogical experts are busy refashioning the curriculum so as to emphasize ethnic studies.[17] A brand-new bibliography for schools lists materials on forty-four "ethnic groups" —from "American Indians" and "Appalachian Americans" to "Ukrainian Americans" and "Welsh Americans."[18]

A few sociologists and educators have raised doubts about the direction that "cultural pluralism" is taking. One of them points out that "in the schools we are still engaged, and most continue to be, in the making of Americans, since this is still a country of mass immigration with large populations still imperfectly integrated into a common nation."[19] In fact, the number of immigrants legally entering this country now runs to

nearly 400,000 a year—much fewer than the million or more of the early 1900s, but still a sizeable figure. Immigration currently accounts for about 20 percent of the country's population growth. The present immigration law, in effect since 1965, is far less restrictive than the laws of the 1920s, and it does not discriminate against people from eastern or southern Europe or from any other part of the world.

The new ethnic curriculum has little or no place for Abraham Lincoln. "To endorse cultural pluralism" the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education has resolved, "is to endorse the principle that there is no one model American."[20] White ethnics naturally expect to celebrate their particular folk heroes while reviving and cherishing their separate folk cultures. Novak concedes "it is important that all students learn something of the formative experiences of the nation"—including Washington, the Revolution, Lincoln, the Civil War, and all that.[21]

With Novak and others like him, however, the nearest thing to one model American is no longer Lincoln. It is John F. Kennedy. When Protestants "talk about 'the old values,'" Novak says, ". . . they do not mean what southern and eastern European Catholics mean. The latter mean by morality a kind of inner placidity, easy-goingness, carefreeness, a tough view of authority, even a bit of mischief (like Jack Kennedy, with his brashness and Irish ruthlessness)."[22] Nowadays the houses of white ethnics are frequently adorned with pictures or statuettes of Kennedy, not Lincoln.[23]

Lincoln in his own time was by no means a favorite among Catholic immigrants, and few if any of them would have displayed his portrait while he was still alive. They were almost all Democrats; he was a Whig and then a Republican, in either case a member of a party that had a reputation for nativism. Yet he was never a nativist himself. Indeed, his record as a political leader—his record on immigration and immigrants

as well as on other matters—amply justifies the high significance he held, temporarily at least, for later Americans of every religion and every national origin.

When, in 1844, news came to Springfield, Illinois, of an anti-foreigner and anti-Catholic riot in Philadelphia, Lincoln called a public meeting to condemn the action of the Philadelphia mob and to deny the charge that the Whig party was to blame for it. He introduced resolutions, which the assembled Springfielders approved, to the effect that every immigrant should be admitted to citizenship as soon as he had been "put to some reasonable test of his fidelity to our country and its institutions" and had dwelled "among us a reasonable time to become generally acquainted with the nature of those institutions." Lincoln's resolutions stressed that "the guarantee of the rights of conscience, as found in our Constitution, is most sacred and inviolable, and one that belongs no less to the Catholic than to the Protestant." Even the Democratic party newspaper of Springfield acknowledged Lincoln's personal sincerity. The Democratic editor commented: "Mr. Lincoln expressed the kindest and most benevolent feelings towards foreigners; they were, I doubt not, the sincere and honest sentiments of *his heart;* but they were not those of *his party.*"[24]

The Whigs and the Democrats were, of course, competing for the foreign vote. While doing so, both of them tried to attract and hold the support of the American-born. The dilemma became especially acute for Lincoln in the 1850s when, as a free-soiler and an incipient Republican, he faced the challenge of the rising Know Nothing party, with its demand for limiting the political rights of the foreign-born in general and the Catholics in particular. He did not want to antagonize the Know Nothings, for he hoped to win them over to the cause of resisting the extension of slavery. Yet he detested their prejudice, and he made his feelings known to everyone who inquired. He was supremely eloquent in a letter of August 24, 1855, to his friend Joshua Speed. To Speed he wrote:

"I am not a Know-Nothing. That is certain. How could I be? How can any one who abhors the oppres-

sion of negroes be in favor of degrading classes of white people? Our progress in degeneracy appears to me to be pretty rapid. As a nation, we began by declaring that '*all men are created equal.*' We now practically read it 'all men are created equal, *except negroes.*' When the Know-Nothings get control, it will read 'all men are created equal, except negroes *and foreigners and catholics.*' When it comes to this, I should prefer emigrating to some country where they make no pretence of loving liberty—to Russia, for instance, where despotism can be taken pure, without the base alloy of hypocracy [*sic*]."[25]

Eventually, almost all the Know Nothings in the North did join the Republican party. Almost none of the Catholic immigrants did so. They were repelled by the new party's various isms—not only its nativism but also its reformism, prohibitionism, and abolitionism. Few if any of these people voted for Lincoln in 1860. He did get the votes, however, of many of the Protestant immigrants, German and Scandinavian as well as British. He seemed to feel that he owed his election largely to such German politicians as Gustave Koerner of Illinois and Carl Schurz of Wisconsin, and he rewarded them generously with the patronage.[26]

Yet Lincoln continued to favor free immigration for all, including the Germans and Irish who habitually voted Democratic. Speaking in Cincinnati, on his way to Washington as President-elect in February 1861, he said: "In regard to Germans and [other] foreigners, I esteem foreigners no better than other people, and no worse." The United States, he went on, is "comparatively a new country," a land of opportunity, "and if they can better their condition by leaving their old homes, there is nothing in my heart to forbid them coming' and I bid them all God speed."[27]

After the firing on Fort Sumter, most of the anti-Lincoln Democrats, the European-born as well as the American-born, had little enthusiasm for Mr. Lincoln's war, and they lost what little they had when he put the draft into effect and proclaimed emancipation as a war aim. Strong disapproval came, for example, from the Milwaukee *Seebote,* a German-language newspaper that

served as the semi-official organ of Wisconsin's Catholic hierarchy. The *Seebote* expressed horror that European immigrants should be "used as fodder for cannons" in an abolitionist war; that, under Lincoln's proclamation, the "Germans, and Irish must be annihilated, to make room for the Negro."[28] Germans, Irishmen, Belgians, and Luxembourgers in Wisconsin rioted against the draft. An Irish mob in New York City demonstrated against both conscription and emancipation by killing hundreds of blacks.[29]

Draft resistance and draft evasion were among the numerous wartime concerns of Lincoln. So many men of foreign birth claimed exemption as aliens that, on May 8, 1863, he issued a proclamation of that subject. He announced he would accept no "plea of alienage" from any immigrant who had ever voted, and he would accept no such plea from any who had not voted but had declared an intention of becoming a citizen and was still in this country sixty-five days after the proclamation's date. Seven months afterward Lincoln reported to Congress: "There is reason to believe that many persons born in foreign countries, who have declared their

intention to become citizens, or who have been fully naturalized, have evaded the military duty required of them by denying the fact . . . ."[30]

Lincoln still welcomed foreigners to the United States, even though he had, in effect, suggested that certain ones get out of the country. Immigrants could come and remain without fear of the draft so long as they took no step toward naturalization and refrained from exercising one of the rights of citizenship, the right to vote. During the first three years of the war the immigration figures had been quite low in comparison with the prewar peak, and employers began to complain of a labor shortage. So Lincoln in December 1863 urged Congress to do something to encourage immigration, and Congress responded with the act of July 4, 1864, which authorized employers to bring in foreign workers under contract and deduct the cost of transportation from future wages.

In December 1864 Lincoln suggested that Congress amend the law so as to "prevent frauds against the im-

migrants while on their way and on their arrival." He also said: "I regard our emigrants [immigrants] as one of the principal replenishing streams which are appointed by Providence to repair the ravages of internal war and its wastes of national strength and health. All that is necessary is to secure the flow of that stream in its present fullness, and to that end the government must, in every way, make it manifest that it neither needs nor designs to impose involuntary military service upon those who come from other lands to cast their lot in our country."[31]

Thus, both before and during his presidency, Lincoln set an example of hospitality and tolerance toward immigrants of whatever country, culture, or creed. He invited them to share not only in economic opportunity but also in the great political experiment that he considered the United States to be. Only time, he believed, would tell whether the principles of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence would permanently work. The founders of the republic—in declaring that "all men are created equal" and are endowed with the rights of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness"—intended to set up a "standard maxim for free society" to be "constantly labored for" and thereby to be constantly "augmenting the happiness and value of life to all people of all colors everywhere." The experiment, therefore, was of vital interest to the whole "family of man."[31]

The principles of the Declaration and the Constitution were in their ultimate origin, as English as the men who proclaimed them, as English as the language the men used. The principles and the language have persisted, and along with them the predominance of the English tone in American civilization, mainly because the English were much the most numerous among those who originally settled the country. In no other country have so many different peoples come together and managed to live together so successfully. They have managed it because, on the whole, they have accepted a

common core of political values—the values that Lincoln so magnificently exemplified and so eloquently expressed. Yet educators of the present complain of "Anglo-conformity" and propose to teach American children that all ethnic heritages and all political traditions are of equal worth and relevance for life in the United States.

The hope that has drawn so many to this country—the hope for a new life in a new land—is at least as old as the discovery of America. And the vision of a new people emerging—one from many—is at least as old as the founding of the republic. At the end of the Revolutionary War this vision moved the pen of Michel de Crèvecoeur, a native of France, a resident of New York. "What then is the American, this new man?" Crèvecoeur inquired in his *Letters from an American Farmer* (1782). He went on to answer: "He is either an European, or the descendant of an European, hence that strange mixture of blood, which you will find in no other country. . . . *He* is an American who, leaving behind him all his ancient prejudices and manners, receives new ones from the new mode of life he has embraced, the new government he obeys, and the new rank he holds. . . . Here individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men, whose labours and posterity will one day cause great changes in the world."[32]

True, the promise of American life is still in the process of fulfillment, as it has been for so long. It has not yet been and perhaps may never be perfectly realized. Still, as Lincoln once asked in regard to the American experiment, "Is there any better, or equal, hope in the world?" That is a good question for those who today would shatter the American dream and idealize its fragments—the separate Polish, Italian, Irish, Greek, Slovak, Hungarian, and dozens of other tribalistic dreams. They would do well to recall, too, another of Lincoln's admonitions: "A house divided against itself cannot stand."[33]

NOTES

[1]See David Donald, "Getting Right with Lincoln," *Harper's Magazine,* 102 (April 1951): 78-80; reprinted in Donald, *Lincoln Reconsidered* (2d ed., New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1966), pp. 3-18.

[2]See Lerone Bennett, Jr., "Was Abe Lincoln a White Supremacist?" *Ebony,* 23 (February 1968): 35-42. See also Mark E. Neely, Jr., "Emancipation: 113 Years Later," *Lincoln Lore* (Bulletin of the Lincoln National Life Foundation, Fort Wayne, Indiana), No. 1653 (November 1975). The Neely article summarizes and interprets the findings of Yvette Fulcher, who, as a student of Gabor S. Boritt's, made a survey of opinion on Lincoln among present-day blacks.

[3]The term "melting pot" meant different things to different people in the early 1900s, as it does today. To some it has connoted the casting off of non-English elements as so much slag. In this sense, it was repudiated by Horace M. Kallen, "Democracy Versus the Melting-Pot," *Nation,* 100 (February 18, 25, 1915): 190-194, 217-220; and by Randolph Bourne, "Trans-National America," *Atlantic Monthly,* 118 (July 1916): 86-97. Kallen (pp. 219-220) proposed a "democracy of nationalities" in the United States, a "harmony" instead of a "unison" of cultures, but he conceded that "the old Anglo-Saxon theme 'America'" should be "dominant, perhaps, among others, but one among many" themes. Bourne thought the wartime revival of immigrant nationalisms had proved the melting pot a failure, but he favored a new cosmopolitan "integration" of American society to create a new "trans-nationality." He preferred (p. 96), as compared with Kallen's metaphor of the symphony, the image of a "weaving . . . of many threads of all sizes and colors," but he cautioned: "It would be folly to absorb the nations faster than we could weave them." In its true, historic meaning, the "melting" ideal may be viewed as essentially consistent with Kallen's "symphony" ideal and Bourne's "weaving" ideal. For an early (1782) statement of the "melting" principle, see the quotation, later in this paper, from Michel de Crèvecoeur.

[4]George M. Stephenson, *A History of American Immigration, 1820-1924* (Boston: Ginn & Co., 1926), p. 132; Richard O'Connor, *The German-Americans: An Informal History* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1968), pp. 132-136; Albert B. Faust, *The German Element in the United States* (2 vols., Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1909), 2:183-184n. In *The Americanization of Edward Bok: The Autobiography of a Dutch Boy Fifty Years After* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1922), the highly successful magazine publisher concluded (pp. 451-452) with the hope that his adopted country might yet live up to its own ideals. "And I ask no greater privilege," Bok wrote, "than to be allowed to live to see my potential America become actual: the America that I like to think of as the America of Abraham Lincoln and of Theodore Roosevelt —not faultless, but less faulty."

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[5]Ella Lyman Cabot and others, *A Course in Patriotism and Citizenship* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1914, 1918), pp. 169-170, 198, 210-211, 231, 242. See also Winthrop Talbot and Julia E. Johnson, eds., *Americanization: Principles of Americanism, Essentials of Americanization, Technic of Race-Assimilation, Annotated Bibliography* (2d. ed., New York: H. W. Wilson Co., 1920), pp. 23, 372-373.

[6]Emory S. Bogardus, *Essentials of Americanization* (Los Angeles: University of Southern California Press, 1923), pp. 9, 57, 66-67, 80, 288.

[7]Julius Drachsler, *Democracy and Assimilation: The Blending of Immigrant Heritages in America* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1920), pp. 184, 187, 211-213, 237. Drachsler was an assimilationist, as the title of his book indicates. He provided statistics (for example, pp. 108, 149) to show the rapidly increasing intermarriage of different nationalities in New York City. What he favored was, essentially, a planned and improved functioning of the melting pot. This is close to what his contemporaries Kallen and Bourne advocated. See footnote 3 above.

[8]Edward Alsworth Ross, *The Old World in the New: The Significance of the Past and Present Immigration to the American People* (New York: The Century Co., 1914), preface. Kallen (see footnote 3 above) was responding to Ross.

[9]Mary Antin, *The Promised Land* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1912), p. 206.

[10]Grace Humphrey, "Lincoln and the Immigrant," *Outlook,* 115 (February 7, 1917); 234.

[11]See Alfred H. Jones, *Roosevelt's Image Brokers: Poets, Playwrights, and the Use of the Lincoln Symbol* (Port Washington, N. Y.: Kennikat Press, 1974), pp. 43-47, 78-81, 94-95, and *passim.*

[12]*Common Ground,* 10 (Autumn 1949): 2. As if to show Lincoln's persisting and widespread relevance, the secretary of Chicago's Polonia Society informed President Roosevelt in February 1945 that the society had just celebrated the birthdays of "these great democrats: Lincoln and Kosciuszko." Quoted in Louis L. Gerson, *The Hyphenate in Recent American Politics and Diplomacy* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1964), p. 173. The naturalization program continued to feature Lincoln's along with other historic figures' statements of American ideals. See Carl B. Hyatt, Director, Attorney General's Citizenship Program, *Gateway to Citizenship* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1943, 1948), pp. 59, 103, 176.

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[13]Andrew M. Greeley, *Ethnicity, Denomination, and Inequality* (Beverly Hills and London: Sage Publications, 1976) pp. 5-12, 45-47, 71.

[14]Richard Krickus, *Pursuing the American Dream: White Ethnics and the New Populism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976), pp. xii-xiii. Greeley has founded and edits the periodical *Ethnicity,* which, quite unlike *Common Ground,* looks for and stresses signs of persisting ethnic distinctiveness. See also Greeley's *Ethnicity in the United States* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1974).

[15]Michael Novak, *The Rise of the Unmeltable Ethnics: Politics and Culture in the Seventies* (New York: The Macmillan Co., paperback edition, 1973), pp. xvii-xviii, 65, 115. Novak himself has "made it" in the academic world, and his own family history involves amalgamation—he has dedicated his book (p. vii) to "the great-grandparents of our children," and these include persons with such names as John Swenson and Dora Carver. To Novak, as to other new ethnic theorists, ethnicity is largely something that one makes up for oneself. He writes (p. 56): "What is an ethnic group? It is a group with historical memory, real or *imaginary.* One belongs to an ethnic group in part involuntarily, in part *by choice.* Given a grandparent or two, *one chooses* to shape one's consciousness by one history rather than another." (Italics added.) Elsewhere Novak pleads again for a "self-conscious and freely chosen ethnicity." Novak, "Cultural Pluralism for Individuals: A Social Vision," in *Pluralism in a Democratic Society,* edited by Melvin M. Tumin and Walter Plotch (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1977), p. 48.

[16]Howard F. Stein and Robert F. Hill, *The Ethnic Imperative: Examining the New White Ethnic Movement* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1977), pp. 195-196.

[17]For professional educationists' endorsements of "cultural pluralism" or "multicultural education," see especially the *Journal of Teacher Education* (published by the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education), Vol. 24, No. 4 (Winter 1973), and *Educational Leadership: Journal of the Association for Supervision and Curricular Development,* Vol. 33, No. 3 (December 1975).

[18]Lois Buttlar and Lubomyr R. Wynar, *Building Ethnic Collections: An Annotated Guide for School Media Centers and Public Libraries* (Littleton, Colo.: Libraries Unlimited, Inc., 1977), pp. 11, 17, and *passim.*

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[19]Nathan Glazer, "Cultural Pluralism: The Social Aspect," in *Pluralism in a Democratic Society,* pp. 17-18. Glazer is professor of psychology at Harvard University. More extensive and highly effective analyses and criticisms of the new trend are to be found in Stein and Hill, *Ethnic Imperative,* and in Orlando Patterson, *Ethnic Chauvinism: The Reactionary Impulse* (New York: Stein and Day, 1977). For dissenting views by educators, see also the educational journals cited in footnote 17 above; see especially Carl J. Dolce, "Multicultural Education: Some Issues," *Journal of Teacher Education,* 24 (Winter 1973): 282-284.

There is no serious objection to ethnic studies as such. Indeed, the role of immigration and of immigrants has been, for much too long, comparatively neglected in the writing and teaching of American history. The doubts and criticisms apply to the particular ways that some advocates would use such studies. These advocates claim to be promoting harmony rather than disunity, but harmony is not likely to arise from teaching each group that it is morally superior to other groups, especially the "WASPs" (who do not really constitute a single, homogeneous entity at all). The advocates claim to favor the free development of each personality, but individualism will hardly gain from the imposition of ethnic stereotypes (the kind of Slovakianization that Novak stands for can scarcely be considered an improvement upon the kind of Americanization that the worst of the nativists once advocated). The democratic ideal is not a society in which each citizen defers to the organizers of some minority group; it is, rather, a society in which each citizen is a minority of one.

[20]"No One Model American: A Statement on Multicultural Education," adopted in November 1972 by the AACTE Board of Directors, *Journal of Teacher Education,* 24 (Winter 1973): 264-265.

[21]Novak, in *Pluralism in a Democratic Society,* p. 43.

[22]Novak, *Rise of the Unmeltable Ethnics,* pp. 202-203. For other flattering references to Kennedy, see also pp. 209, 214, 299.

[23]Stein and Hill, *Ethnic Imperative,* pp. 106-107. See also pp. 99, 105.

[24]Roy P. Basler and others, eds., *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* (9 vols., New Brunswick, N. J.: Rutgers University Press, 1953-1955), 1:337-338.

[25]*Collected Works,* 2:323. For other disavowals of Know-Nothingism, see 2:234, 316, 524, and 3:383.

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[26]For a collection of the best scholarship on the subject, see Frederick C. Luebke, ed., *Ethnic Voters and the Election of Lincoln* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1971). See especially the editor's preface, pp. xxv-xxxii.

[27]*Collected Works,* 4:203.

[28]*Seebote,* October 25, 1862, quoted in Mary D. Meyer, "The Germans in Wisconsin and the Civil War: Their Attitude Toward the Union, the Republicans, Slavery, and Lincoln" (master's thesis, Catholic University of America, 1937), pp. 45-46.

[29]On immigrant resistance to the draft in Wisconsin, see Richard N. Current, *The History of Wisconsin, Volume II: The Civil War Era, 1848-1873* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1976), pp. 315-319, 324-327, 331-333. For a brief account of the New York draft riots of 1863, see Fred A. Shannon, *The Organization and Administration of the Union Army, 1861-1865* (2 vols., Cleveland: The Arthur H. Clark Co., 1928), 2:205-215. For a long and vivid account, see J. T. Headley, *Pen and Pencil Sketches of the Great Riots* (New York: E. B. Treat, 1882; reprint edition, Arno Press & The New York Times, 1969), pp. 136-335.

[30]*Collected Works,* 6:203-204, 7:38.

[31]For a discussion of Lincoln's devotion to the principles of the Declaration and the Constitution, see Richard N. Current, ed., *The Political Thought of Abraham Lincoln* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc., 1967), pp. xiii-xxxi.

[32]J. Hector St. John, *Letters from an American Farmer* (New York: Fox, Duffield & Co., 1904), pp. 54-55. St. John was Crèvecoeur's pen name, and the book was originally published in London in 1782. The president of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education ignorantly asserts: "The melting pot concept was an historians' invention, a way of looking at society as some men *wished* to see it." *Journal of Teacher Education,* 24 (Winter 1973): 262. Actually, the concept represents the aspirations of immigrants themselves and has had a long history. In place of the "melting pot," new ethnics would substitute the metaphor of "stew" or a "mosaic."

[33]The first of these Lincoln quotations is from his inaugural address, March 4, 1861, and the second is from his Springfield address of June 16, 1858. *Collected Works,* 2:461, 4:270.

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